U. S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND WELFARE-Public Health Service

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NEWS

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CHANGES IN THE OFFING

Two months from now the January 1963 issue of the Index Medicus will appear and some notable changes will immediately be evident.

The 1963 volume is transitional to the full MEDLARS operation beginning in 1964. All material appearing in Index Medicus for 1963 will be subsequently converted, with the help of ingeniously modified tape-perforating typewriters, to form the basic MEDLARS store to be used in testing system operations, and to provide a reservoir in the system from which other MEDLARS objectives, in addition to Index Medicus, may be met from the outset.

The format of the 1963 volume will therefore prefigure, in many ways, the MEDLARS product. Perhaps the most striking change will be the abandonment of the use of subheadings.

The use of subheadings is not efficient in a machine search system; in printed indexes and catalogs they perform a useful purpose in that they serve to "break up" masses of entries and thus narrow the search more rapidly to pertinent areas. But even this use is fraught with dangers because of the near impossibility of selecting subheadings which define mutually exclusive concepts. Too often one finds it necessary, in exhaustive searches, to scan all material under a majority of the subheadings used, in order to be confident of having covered the field.

To compensate for the deletion of subheadings the NLM authority list, Medical Subject Headings, has been revised and expanded by more than one-third. This means that more specific main headings are available; many of them are frank equivalents of the old main heading-subheading combinations. Working with the evidence provided by the 1960 and 1961 cumulations, NLM has tried to provide solutions of the heading problems in all those areas in which experience has shown that there is a tendency for large numbers of entries to agglomerate.

Since Medical Subject Headings is also used as the authority list for the NLM Catalog, and since all entries for books will eventually be included in the MEDLARS product (American imprints in 1964, all in 1965), the use of subheadings in the printed and card subject catalogs will also be abandoned.

These matters will be discussed at greater length in the preface to the January 1963 Index Medicus; Part 2 of that issue will be the new edition of Medical Subject Headings, distributed automatically to all subscribers.

INTERPRETER

Dr. Galina Zarechnak of NLM's Technical Services Division was detailed on September 24 to serve as an interpreter for four Russian cardiologists: Professors Aleksandr Myasnikov, Nodar N. Kipshidze, Pavel Y. Lukomskiy, and Dmitry D. Venediktov. Dr. Zarechnak accompanied them on a tour of the United States; it was distressing to find her identified in a picture in the Rochester, Minnesota, papers as "Dr. Zarechnak of the National Library of Medicine, Moscow."

BUILDING PROGRESS

When the new building of the National Library of Medicine was occupied six months ago the original list of omissions and deficiencies in construction numbered 377 items. There were 283 items corrected in the first three months and an additional 57 items corrected in the second three months. The score is now 340 down and 37 to go.

VISITORS

As the fall season opened, the Library has been receiving a large number of visitors every day. In addition to those from the 50 states, visitors have come from Argentina, Bolivia, Costa Rica, Denmark, France, Germany, Ghana, India, Iran, Israel, Japan, Netherlands, Philippines, Russia, Senegal, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom.

DEPUTY DIRECTOR SPEAKS

In San Diego on October 26 Mr. Scott Adams, NLM Deputy Director, addressed the Hospitals and Institutions Round Table of the California Library Association on the topic "A New Mission for Hospital Medical Libraries?" On October 29 he spoke to the meeting in Los Angeles of the Association of American Medical Colleges on "Medical Library Resources and Their Development."

GUERRA BIBLIOGRAPHY

The National Library of Medicine salutes a major contribution to the history of medicine: Francisco Guerra's monumental American Medical Bibliography, 1639-1783, New York, Lathrop C. Harper, 1962, 885 p. Dr. Guerra has listed 719 books, pamphlets, broadsides; 506 almanacs; 25 magazines and 199 newspapers published within the present United States before 1784. For each he gives collation, references, locations, and notes. The last, often quite lengthy, describe briefly the contents of medical interest, and in some cases add bibliographical data. There are the usual tables of reference symbols, a full bibliography, and special lists of various kinds, including a very useful one of European publications of American authors, subject and name indexes.

Dr. Guerra has cast his net widely, including all sorts of publications--sessions laws, sermons, and book catalogs, for example--which might be considered of interest to a medical historian. The most valuable part will, in all likelihood, be the running contents notes of newspapers. For the incredible labor of compiling these, historians will be indebted to Dr. Guerra for decades to come.

GIFT

Southern Illinois University has donated to the National Library of Medicine, out of gratitude for NLM's interlibrary loan service, some duplicate and out-of-scope medical works remaining from the complete library of a prominent Ecuadorian physician which has been purchased by the University. The gift yielded a return of 29% of the items; 147 issues filled in gaps, and 363 duplicates were retained as possible MLA Exchange listings. Twenty-four new titles were set up for more attention by acquisition personnel.

UNUSUAL REQUESTS

The NLM has recently received a letter from France addressed to two individuals unknown at the Library. Reflection on the peculiar form of the names, in which the family name was followed by initials, without punctuation, gave rise to the suspicion that the names had been lifted from the Index Medicus. Sure enough, it was a request for interlibrary loan of an article by the two gentlemen named.

A careful reader of the NLM Dedication Day reprint of the Library's first catalogue has written to inquire whether Slang Whanging is available on interlibrary loan. The book is still in the collection, but the Library had to report that it does not circulate.

PUBLICATIONS

A paper entitled "The National Library of Medicine's Role in Improving Medical Communications," prepared originally for presentation at a hearing of a subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations of the House of Representatives, February 7, 1962, has been reprinted in The American Journal of Medical Electronics 1:230-41 (July-September 1962).

A paper entitled "Stresses in Current Medical Bibliography" by Dr. Frank B. Rogers appears in the New England Journal of Medicine 267:704-8 (October 4, 1962).

The long-awaited study by Mr. William H. Kurth, Survey of the Interlibrary Loan Operation of the National Library of Medicine, bearing a date of April 1962 but actually received late last month, is now available. This 49-page study contains 8 figures and 31 tables elucidating the pattern of loans from NLM.

Some requests received earlier this year at NLM for reprints of articles from the NLM Anniversary Issue of the Bulletin of the Medical Library Association (July 1961) were turned down in error. The supply of these reprints is ample and requests will be honored.

NLM's Annual Report for FY 1962 has appeared and a few copies are still available.

LIBRARY USE

NLM notes that interlibrary loan requests in the first quarter of Fiscal Year 1963 are up 7% over the first quarter of the previous fiscal year. For the same period, reader requests in the Library are up 31%.

CORRECTION

NLM has been asked to amplify an item which appeared in last month's NEWS. The Regional Report Center for the northern California, Nevada, and Hawaii areas is the University of California, Berkeley (and not that part of the University of California which is located in San Francisco).

CONGRESS PAPERS

All papers being submitted for the Second International Congress on Medical Librarianship (Washington, June 16-22, 1963) are due this month at the Congress Secretariat located at the National Library of Medicine.

Use of funds for printing this publication approved by the Director of the Bureau of the Budget, February 26, 1960